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COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

Report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its twenty-ninth session

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its twenty-ninth session (Geneva, 15, 16 and 19 June 1995). The report, which was issued as document E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.12, was submitted to the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination at its eighteenth session (New York, 16-18 April 1996). The report is transmitted to the Commission as requested at its twenty-eighth session. 1/

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 8 (E/1995/28), chap. I, sect. B.

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* The report is also relevant to discussion under agenda items 3-12 and 14.

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REPORT OF THE ACC SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES ON ITS TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

(Geneva, 15, 16 and 19 June 1995)

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1	4
I. MATTERS FOR ENDORSEMENT OR APPROVAL BY THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS	2	4
II. WORK OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES	3 - 30	5
A. Issues related to the work of the task forces, including coordination at the regional level	3 - 12	5
B. Improvement of coordination tools	13 - 15	8
C. Needs for statistics of the analytical and policy units of international organizations and the statistics produced by those organizations	16	10
D. Coordination of follow-up for statistical activities related to international conferences	17	10
E. Monitoring the implementation of recommended classifications in countries	18	10
F. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development	19	11
G. Integration of the work of ad hoc groups in international work on statistical development	20	11
H. Bilateral technical cooperation in statistics	21	11
I. Coordination of ongoing statistical programmes	22 - 23	12
J. Follow-up to the twenty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission	24	12
K. Possible holding of a world statistics day	25	12
L. Free exchange of statistics and related materials among international organizations active in the Subcommittee	26	13

CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
M.	Report of the Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections	27	13
N.	Communication by electronic mail	28	13
O.	Election of the Chairman and Bureau for the thirtieth session of the Subcommittee	29	14
P.	Other business: observer status for the Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States	30	14

Annexes

I.	Agenda	15
II.	List of participants	16

INTRODUCTION

1. The ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities held its twenty-ninth session at Geneva on 15, 16 and 19 June 1995. The agenda is contained in annex I; the list of participants, in annex II.

I. MATTERS FOR ENDORSEMENT OR APPROVAL BY THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS

2. The following six matters are brought to the attention of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ):

(a) The Subcommittee supported as an interim measure the maintenance of the existing ACC classification for statistical activities as input into the overall review of the ACC Programme Classification, (with "role of women" replaced by "status of women", as decided by the Subcommittee at its twenty-eighth session (see ACC/1994/1, para. 2 (c)));

(b) The Subcommittee stressed the special need to coordinate efforts on a system-wide basis so as to meet the needs for statistical data for monitoring the follow-up to international conferences. It noted that the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat (UNSTAT) would try, with other interested organizations, to develop a mechanism for that kind of coordination. The Subcommittee also noted the initiatives taken by the Government of Denmark and the Statistical Commission to promote the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, including its statistical aspects;

(c) The Subcommittee endorsed current efforts to coordinate substantive work on demographic estimates and projections, as set out in the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections (SCDEP);

(d) The Subcommittee elected F. Mehran of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as Chairman of the Subcommittee, with effect from the conclusion of its twenty-ninth session, and requested that R. Roberts of UNSTAT continue to serve as Secretary of both the Subcommittee and the Bureau. The Subcommittee decided that the Bureau should in future include the previous Chairman of the Subcommittee, so as to provide for enhanced continuity in the work of the Bureau. It decided that, immediately following its twenty-ninth session, the Bureau should comprise:

H. Habermann (United Nations; ex officio; permanent member)

J.-M. Leger (World Trade Organization; term ends 1997)

J. McIenaghan (International Monetary Fund; term ends 1997)

F. Mehran (International Labour Organization; term ends 1997)

P. Sainz (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; term ends 1996);

(e) The Subcommittee, in line with its existing practices concerning observers, agreed to invite the Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States to participate in future sessions of the Subcommittee as an observer;

(f) The Subcommittee recommended that its thirtieth session be held from 7 to 9 May 1996 in New York. The provisional agenda - subject to review and finalization by the Bureau, which was requested to take account of suggestions from members of the Subcommittee - was agreed as follows:

1. Issues related to the work of the task forces.

2. New developments relating to coordination tools.

3. The statistics part of the ACC Programme Classification.

4. Coordination of the follow-up of statistical activities related to international conferences.

5. Technical cooperation in statistics.

6. Coordination of ongoing statistical programmes.

7. Critical problems in economic statistics.

8. Provisional agenda and documentation for the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission.

II. WORK OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

A. Issues related to the work of the task forces, including coordination at the regional level

3. The Subcommittee discussed the work of each of the eight task forces and reached a number of decisions, which are described below.

1. Environment statistics

4. The Subcommittee:

(a) Recognized the growing importance of environment statistics to all sectors of society, the large number of different kinds of organizations that were active in the field as a result and the concomitant problems that had been raised for coordination;

(b) Requested the Task Force to focus on the basic tasks of increasing the transparency of the objectives of organizations active in the field and reducing duplication, choosing approaches that it considered most appropriate, given the prevailing conditions mentioned above;

(c) Noted that the Task Force would report to the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination of the Statistical Commission on improving coordination and developing targets and priorities.

2. Finance statistics

5. The Subcommittee noted that the Task Force on Finance Statistics, in response to the request of the Statistical Commission, would consider how and under what modalities coordination of work would continue in the field.

3. Services statistics

6. The Subcommittee:

(a) Noted the report of the Task Force on Services Statistics on its session held in Paris in May 1995, and endorsed its work programme for the coming year;

(b) Noted the work being carried out by UNSTAT on the statistics of the domestic (within-country) service sector in developing countries.

4. National accounts

7. The Subcommittee:

(a) Welcomed the steps taken by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) and its member organizations to address the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA) in countries, including the work being done by the regional commissions on collecting information about and assessing national implementation plans;

(b) Supported broader dissemination/accessibility of the SNA Newsletter;

(c) Emphasized again the urgency of completing the language editions of the 1993 SNA and of the handbooks and manuals;

(d) Agreed with the proposal by ISWGNA to prepare a paper outlining the strategy for implementation of the 1993 SNA in countries, including benchmarks that would aid in measuring progress.

5. Industrial and construction statistics

8. The Subcommittee noted the work done by the Task Force on Industrial and Construction Statistics and its members, and agreed that it was both important and difficult to monitor the implementation of classifications. It also noted that an Expert Group on Construction Statistics was to be convened by UNSTAT in New York from 11 to 13 September 1995, in accordance with the recommendation of the Statistical Commission.

6. Price statistics including the International Comparison Programme

9. The Subcommittee:

(a) Noted that the Task Force on Price Statistics including the International Comparison Programme had largely concluded its initial task, bearing in mind its terms of reference, and that the Task Force had concluded that there was no duplication of activity in the field on the part of international organizations;

(b) Noted the lack of interest and/or resources for further contribution to the work of the Task Force on the part of some of its members;

(c) Agreed that, while the field remained an important one, many of its concerns might be taken up by the Expert Group on Critical Problems in Economic Statistics;

(d) Agreed that the Task Force should be discontinued.

7. Measurement of poverty

10. The Subcommittee:

(a) Agreed that the measurement of poverty was a problem of continuing concern and that developments in the field should be monitored;

(b) Agreed with the recommendation of the Expert Group on Social Statistics established by the Statistical Commission that an expert group on the measurement of poverty should be created, consisting of experts drawn from countries and international organizations, and also agreed that an expert group was a suitable mechanism for follow-up to the Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty;

(c) Agreed with the Expert Group on Social Statistics that it was not yet appropriate to develop a standardized international definition of poverty but that the proposed expert group should identify existing problems and potential solutions in the field in individual countries;

(d) Noted that the Expert Group on Social Statistics would report to the Working Group of the Statistical Commission;

(e) Requested the World Bank to clarify the status of the report of the Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty that was scheduled to be considered by the Working Group.

8. International trade statistics

11. The Subcommittee:

(a) Noted the actions taken by the Task Force on International Trade Statistics in response to the requests of the Statistical Commission and the work done by the Task Force as reflected in the report of its meeting held from 8 to 10 May 1995;

(b) Strongly supported the efforts being made to increase the exchange of data among organizations so as to reduce reporting burdens on countries and increase the consistency of data maintained by the organizations, but emphasized that user needs were a primary concern to be taken account of in any data-exchange arrangements.

9. General issues relating to the task forces

12. The Subcommittee:

(a) Recognized that the work of some of the task forces could be discontinued or could be handled more appropriately by expert groups that included representatives of countries and organizations;

(b) Requested the conveners of task forces and other similar meetings to schedule meetings, as far as possible, in such a way as to maximize the possibilities for participation by organizations, with a special emphasis on promoting participation by the regional commissions.

B. Improvement of coordination tools

1. Status and plans

13. The Subcommittee:

(a) Welcomed the completion of work on updating the inventory of statistical data-collection activities, the list of classifications used in statistics and the inventory of computerized statistical databases, as well as the initial work on updating volume II of the Directory of International Statistics, all of which were compiled by UNSTAT based on information provided by the members of the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee also welcomed the annual report on international statistical work prepared by the International Statistical Institute (ISI);

(b) Stressed the importance of producing the annotated list of methodological publications, which was seen as having high priority, as soon as possible;

(c) Emphasized the value to countries and international organizations of the above-mentioned coordination tools;

(d) Welcomed the issuance of the above-mentioned outputs on diskette, supplemented where appropriate by hard copy outputs;

(e) Requested UNSTAT to (i) re-examine the content and methods of updating of its outputs, particularly with a view to maintaining them on an ongoing rather than a periodic basis, and to develop the necessary arrangements with organizations to supply inputs on that basis; (ii) consider the modalities needed to consolidate the many tools into a unified presentation; (iii) consider the circulation of the outputs so that the full range of potential users might have access to them; and (iv) review the media used for the outputs with a view to making them easily accessible;

(f) Requested UNSTAT to consult with the Information Systems Coordinating Committee on relevant aspects of the distribution of outputs;

(g) Requested UNSTAT to report on the above-mentioned matters to the Bureau at its next meeting.

2. Proposals for the statistics part of the ACC Programme Classification

14. The Subcommittee:

(a) Supported as an interim measure the maintenance of the existing ACC classification for statistical activities as input into the overall review of the ACC Programme Classification (with "role of women" replaced by "status of women", as decided by the Subcommittee at its twenty-eighth session (see ACC/1994/1, para. 2 (c)));

(b) Requested the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the ILO and ISI to study the current and potential uses of the Classification so as to determine any desirable changes and to report to the Bureau at its next meeting.

3. An integrated approach to the presentation of statistical programmes in the global setting

15. The Subcommittee was briefed on the approach in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region to promoting the coordination of statistical work, in particular the integrated presentation of the work programmes of ECE, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other major international agencies active in the region. The Subcommittee:

(a) Noted that in the other regions, unique approaches to the coordination of work programmes and other collaborative efforts were being applied, initially on an experimental basis. Those efforts were considered appropriate to the circumstances in each region and drew on ECE experience when that seemed appropriate;

(b) Considered that the ECE approach, which appeared to be very effective in the ECE region, would not be effective at the world level, given the significant differences in the needs and institutional arrangements that prevailed in each region and the other mechanisms for cooperation that had recently been introduced.

C. Needs for statistics of the analytical and policy units of international organizations and the statistics produced by those organizations

16. The Subcommittee:

(a) Considered the reports of UNSTAT, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), OECD and Eurostat, which had been invited to analyse the situations of their own organizations;

(b) Noted that each of the organizations was aware of the existing problems and the potential for duplicative reporting of data, and that action to address those concerns was being taken and would continue. However, even in those organizations where action had been taken, continued attention was necessary to ensure that duplicative demands on countries were minimized;

(c) Recognized that the data that was being collected was relevant to the policy needs of the organizations.

D. Coordination of follow-up for statistical activities related to international conferences

17. The Subcommittee:

(a) Stressed the special need to coordinate efforts on a system-wide basis, so as to meet the needs for statistical data to monitor the follow-up to international conferences;

(b) Noted that UNSTAT would try, with other interested organizations, to develop a mechanism for that kind of coordination. The Subcommittee suggested that the process should recognize two principles: that duplication should be reduced and that available information, including administrative data, should be used to the maximum extent possible.

E. Monitoring the implementation of recommended classifications in countries

18. The Subcommittee recalled the discussion under agenda item 2 (see paras. 3-12 above) and reconfirmed the conclusions it had reached in respect of the Task Force on Industrial and Construction Statistics (see para. 8 above).

F. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development

19. The Subcommittee:

(a) Noted the initiatives taken by the Government of Denmark to promote the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, including its statistical aspects;

(b) Noted that the Statistical Commission had established an Expert Group to follow up the statistical implications of the Summit. The Expert Group had already established a work programme to be carried out by specified countries and organizations and would report to the Working Group of the Statistical Commission (see para. 10 above).

G. Integration of the work of ad hoc groups in international work on statistical development

20. The Subcommittee:

(a) Recognized that ad hoc groups, such as the Voorburg, Siena and London groups, were accomplishing useful work in the statistical field;

(b) Stressed that it was difficult to have a single position on its relationships with all ad hoc groups, because each was different in composition, focus and style;

(c) Stressed that the members of the Subcommittee should keep abreast of the work of the ad hoc groups, should participate in such work, where appropriate, and should encourage the groups to bring relevant work into the formal international statistical system, making it as compatible as possible with the ongoing work of the formal system and broadening it for wider use;

(d) Considered that such contact could best be maintained through the existing inter-agency task forces that were working in the same areas as the ad hoc groups;

(e) Considered that it could be useful to find ways to promote the dissemination of suitable outputs of the ad hoc groups.

H. Bilateral technical cooperation in statistics

21. The Subcommittee:

(a) Noted the range of difficulties implicit in any approach to measuring the flows of technical cooperation from bilateral donors;

(b) Welcomed the experimental approach that UNSTAT was developing to try to obtain information from recipient and donor countries on the scale, composition, source, destination and changes over time of bilateral technical cooperation;

(c) Welcomed the offers of supplementary information that had been made by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), IMF, Eurostat and other bodies;

(d) Noted that UNSTAT would report to the Working Group of the Statistical Commission on the results of its efforts.

I. Coordination of ongoing statistical programmes

1. 2000 World Population and Housing Programme

22. The Subcommittee welcomed the intentions of the ILO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to contribute to the Expert Group on the subject, and noted suggestions on the conduct of the Expert Group in coping with the size of the agenda in relation to the time available.

2. Migration statistics

23. The Subcommittee noted the plans of UNSTAT and Eurostat to hold a joint expert group to revise the United Nations recommendations on migration statistics.

J. Follow-up to the twenty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission

24. The Subcommittee:

(a) Considered that the requests by the Statistical Commission that were of particular concern to the Subcommittee were being attended to;

(b) Noted that the work being done on critical issues of economic statistics was particularly timely and was of concern to both developed and developing countries.

K. Possible holding of a world statistics day

25. The Subcommittee, while recognizing the value of national statistical days in those countries that had them, expressed reservations on the potential value of and support for holding a world statistics day, especially in the light of the resources needed and the absence of well-developed objectives.

L. Free exchange of statistics and related materials among international organizations active in the Subcommittee

26. The Subcommittee:

(a) Reconfirmed the existing policies and practices of the free exchange of statistical data in various media, taking into consideration relevant copyright considerations;

(b) Recognized that a range of organizational policies existed for the dissemination and exchange of other publications, including methodological publications;

(c) Decided that the issue of the exchange of methodological publications required further information and consideration, and requested the Bureau to take up the matter at its next meeting.

M. Report of the Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections

27. The Subcommittee:

(a) Endorsed the current efforts under way to coordinate substantive work on demographic estimates and projections, as set out in the report of SCDEP;

(b) Welcomed the decision of the World Bank to cease its own work in the area and to rely on the population estimates/projections developed through SCDEP;

(c) Noted in particular that SCDEP would take up at its June 1996 meeting the question of OECD and Eurostat participating in its proceedings as observers;

(d) Requested SCDEP to report on that issue to the Subcommittee or the Bureau, whichever met first after the SCDEP meeting of June 1996.

N. Communication by electronic mail

28. The Subcommittee:

(a) Supported the increasing use of electronic mail (E-mail) for communications among Subcommittee members and for the distribution of documents;

(b) Requested UNSTAT to determine the benefits that could accrue to the Subcommittee from the work being carried out in the Information Systems Coordinating Committee;

(c) Welcomed the list of E-mail addresses of members and requested members to provide UNSTAT with any corrections so that a revised list could be prepared and circulated.

O. Election of the Chairman and Bureau for the thirtieth session of the Subcommittee

29. The Subcommittee:

(a) Decided that the Bureau should henceforth include the past Chairman of the Subcommittee so as to provide for enhanced continuity in the work of the Bureau;

(b) In line with previously agreed procedures and item (a) above, decided that, immediately following the twenty-ninth session, the Bureau should comprise:

H. Habermann (UNSTAT; ex officio)	(Term: permanent)
J.-M. Leger (WTO)	(Term ends 1997)
J. McLenaghan (IMF)	(Term ends 1997)
F. Mehran (ILO)	(Term ends 1997)
P. Sainz (ECLAC)	(Term ends 1996)

(c) Elected F. Mehran of the ILO as Chairman of the Subcommittee, with effect from the conclusion of the twenty-ninth session;

(d) Requested that R. Roberts of UNSTAT continue to serve as Secretary of the Subcommittee and Bureau.

P. Other business: observer status for the Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States

30. The Subcommittee, in line with its existing practices concerning observers, agreed to invite the Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States to participate in future sessions of the Subcommittee as an observer.

Annex I

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

2. Issues related to the work of the task forces, including coordination issues at the regional level.

3. Improvement of coordination tools.

4. Needs for statistics of the analytical and policy units of international organizations and the statistics produced by those organizations.

5. Monitoring the implementation of recommended classifications in countries.

6. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

7. Integration of the work of ad hoc groups in international work on statistical development.

8. Bilateral technical cooperation in statistics.

9. Coordination of ongoing statistical programmes.

10. Follow-up to the twenty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission.

11. Possible holding of a world statistics day.

12. Free exchange of statistics and related materials among international organizations active in the Subcommittee.

13. Report of the Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections.

14. Communication by electronic mail.

15. Election of the Chairman and Bureau for the thirtieth session of the Subcommittee.

16. Coordination of follow-up for statistical activities related to international conferences.

17. Other business: observer status for the Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

18. Adoption of the report.

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

United Nations entities and programmes

Statistical Division, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the United Nations Secretariat	H. Habermann R. Roberts (Secretary)
Economic Commission for Europe	T. Griffin
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	A. J. Flatt
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	P. Sainz
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	L. Abdunnur
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	J. Richtering
United Nations Development Programme	M. Chamie
United Nations Population Fund	A. MacDonald M. Sazaki
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements	L. Ludvigsen
United Nations Drug Control Programme	A. Norsker

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization	F. Mehran R. Rassou
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	L. O. Larson
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	S. Gajraj
World Health Organization	H. R. Hapsara S. Lwanga
World Bank	M. Ward

International Monetary Fund	J. McLenaghan (Chairman) S. Quinn
Universal Postal Union	N. Gogniat
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	G. Robyn
World Trade Organization	J.-M. Leger
<u>Other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations</u>	
Inter-American Development Bank	M. McPeak
International Statistical Institute	Z. Kenessey
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	C. L. Kincannon H. Brüngger
Statistical Office of the European Communities	Y. Franchet J. Whitworth
<u>ACC bodies</u>	
Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions	D. Deane S. Toh
Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections	L. Naiken

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